

Bridging the Gaps



Bridging the Gaps with Philadelphia's Most Vulnerable Youth

Student Interns

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Academic Preceptor

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Community Preceptor

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COMMUNITY PARTNER

Youth Emergency Service (YES), located in the Fairmount section of Philadelphia, provides temporary housing (2 to 3 weeks) for youth ages 12-18 who are housing insecure or are facing potentially abusive homes. They provide the youth with meals, activities, trips, social support and educational programming.

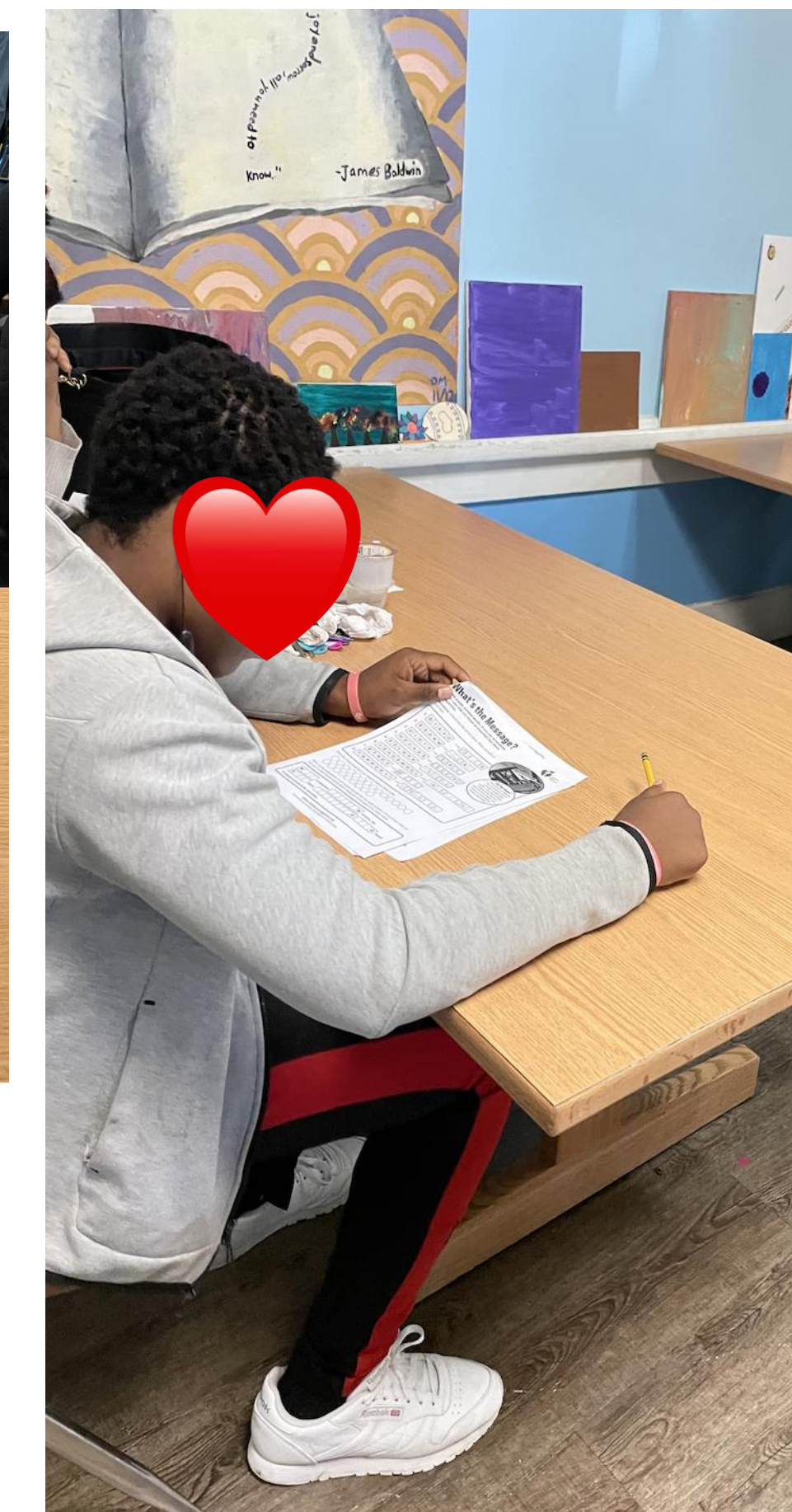
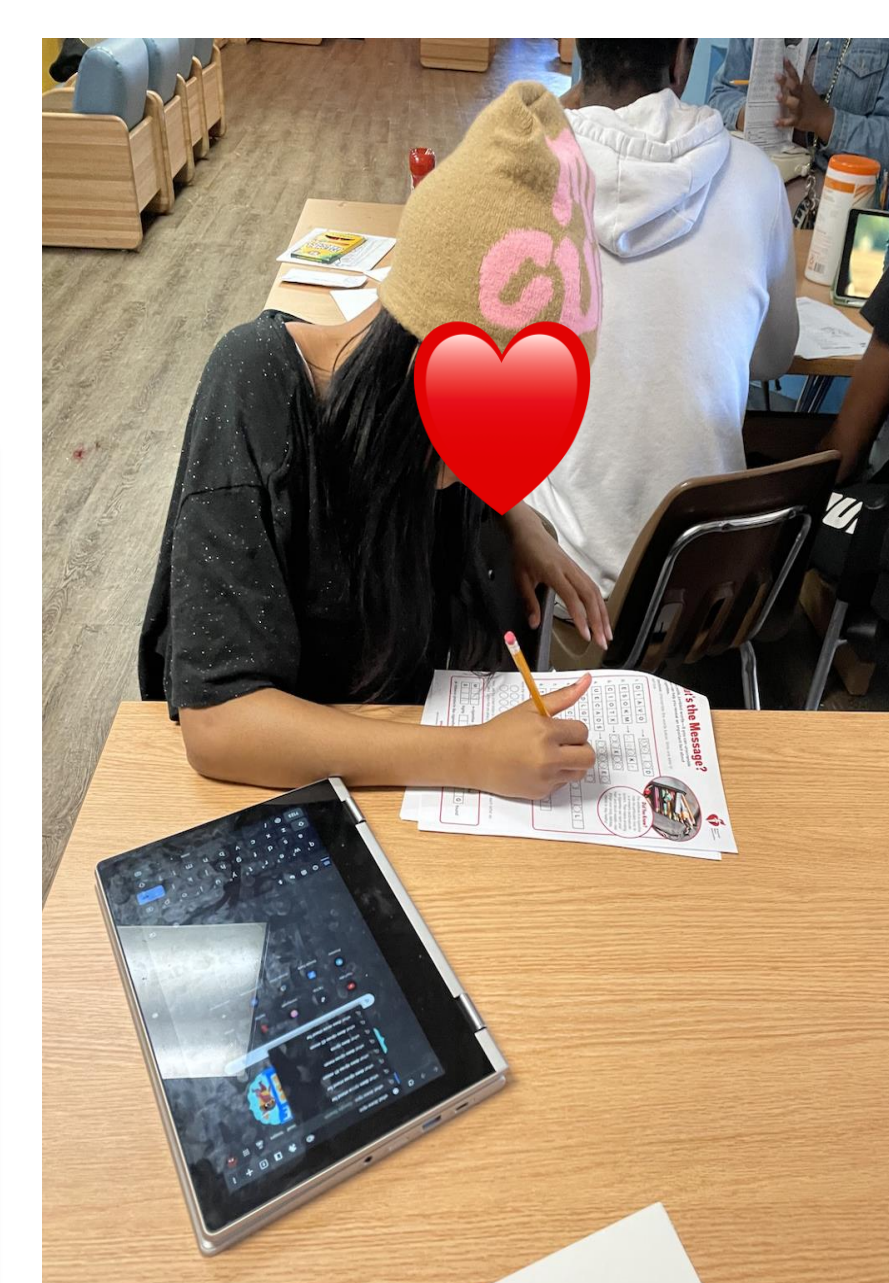
<https://www.hopephl.org/youth-emergency-service.html>

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

- Each night up to 100 000 children are accommodated in temporary facilities in the USA. ¹
- As per the 2021 Report from the Philadelphia Office of Homeless Services (OHS), youth homelessness accounted for at least 9% of the homeless population in Philadelphia. However, it is essential to note that the available data considerably underestimates the actual number of youth experiencing homelessness (YEH) in the city.
- These youth belong to some of the most marginalized populations and encounter various difficulties. Due to their vulnerability, these young individuals find it tough to access and connect with provider organizations. Consequently, even though their needs are high, homeless and unstably housed youth show limited utilization of health and social services. ²

YOUTH HOMELESSNESS MATTERS

The impacts for young people experiencing homelessness are complex and include:



TEAM'S EXPERIENCE

The Bridging the Gaps interns created weekly interactive workshops for the youth on topics such as cardiovascular health, smoking cessation, and STDs. They were also able to organize and plan trips to places such as the Mütter Museum and the Franklin Institute. They also assisted other staff with fun projects such as arts and crafts and programming on things such as financial literacy and life skills. The youth enjoyed these workshops and being able to learn health in a fun way.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS/ CHALLENGES/ JOYS

- Created and facilitated workshops about cardiovascular health, smoking cessation and STDs
- created learning packets for the youth
- Organized and planned educational 'fun friday' trips
- created welcome backpacks for new youth who arrived at the shelter. They included sheets, pajamas, undergarments and sock.
- made great connections with the youth and staff at YES.

REFLECTION

Brooklyn: I am truly grateful to have had the opportunity to work with the youth and staff at YES. Working in this area of public health has allowed me to see first hand the need for resources and dedicated individuals to help this population. I was glad to get to know the amazing kids this summer and the hardworking employees that help keep this program running. Prior to BTG I thought that I would not be good at working with adolescents, but this opportunity has led me to want to pursue working in this area.

Noel: I am honored to have been part of the BTG internship that provided me with invaluable hands-on opportunities to work directly with vulnerable populations, which I would not have encountered in medical school. Working at a homeless shelter has exposed me to the immense hardships and health challenges faced by the homeless community, leaving a lasting impact on me. I believe programs like this can be a catalyst for breaking the cycle of homelessness. This empowerment sets the stage for the youth to construct a brighter future. I believe that when we invest in the youth residing in shelters, we are also investing in the potential of tomorrow's innovators and changemakers. Homeless individuals often battle a multitude of health problems, encompassing physical, mental, and social dimensions. As a future physician, my aspiration is to address not only their immediate physical ailments, but also to recognize and tackle the underlying factors contributing to their current situation - practicing a holistic care approach.